

Binding energy of semirelativistic N -boson systems

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Abstract. General analytic energy bounds are derived for N -boson systems governed by semirelativistic Hamiltonians of the form

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^N (\mathbf{p}_i^2 + m^2)^{1/2} + \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N V(r_{ij}),$$

where $V(r)$ is a static attractive pair potential. A translation-invariant model Hamiltonian H_c is constructed. We conjecture that $\langle H \rangle \geq \langle H_c \rangle$ generally, and we prove this for $N = 3$, and for $N = 4$ when $m = 0$. The conjecture is also valid generally for the harmonic oscillator and in the nonrelativistic large- m limit. This formulation allows reductions to scaled 3- or 4-body problems, whose spectral bottoms provide energy lower bounds. The example of the ultrarelativistic linear potential is studied in detail and explicit upper- and lower-bound formulas are derived and compared with earlier bounds.

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1. Introduction

One-body Hamiltonians H composed of the relativistic expression $\sqrt{\mathbf{p}^2 + m^2}$ for the kinetic energy of particles of mass m and momentum \mathbf{p} and of a coordinate-dependent static interaction potential $V(\mathbf{r})$, defined as operator sum

$$H = \sqrt{\mathbf{p}^2 + m^2} + V(\mathbf{r}),$$

provide a simple but very efficient tool for the description of relativistically moving particles [1, 2, 3]. They have been used, for instance, for the description of hadrons as bound states of quarks [4]. One of the advantages of this kind of semirelativistic treatment is that its generalization to the many-body problem is straightforward to formulate [5]. A semirelativistic Hamiltonian for a system of N identical particles interacting by pair potentials $V(r_{ij})$ is given by

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^N \sqrt{p_i^2 + m^2} + \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N V(r_{ij}). \quad (1.1)$$

We use the notational simplification $p \equiv \|\mathbf{p}\|$, $r \equiv \|\mathbf{r}\|$, or $r_{ij} \equiv \|\mathbf{r}_i - \mathbf{r}_j\|$, whenever no ambiguity is introduced by so doing. Many approaches to such many-body problems for identical particles employ the very powerful constraint of permutation symmetry to generate their reduction to a two-body problem with a Hamiltonian \mathcal{H} whose spectrum is used to approximate the many-body energy eigenvalues or to generate a lower energy bound. This reduction may be effected in various ways, which leads to the problem of finding the most effective reduced problem, the one which would provide the *highest* lower bound. In one analysis [6] involving pseudo-fermions (where the necessary permutation antisymmetry is carried entirely by the spatial part of the wave function), an optimization is considered over a real parameter which characterizes the degree of orthogonality of the matrix B that defines the relative coordinates. For boson systems, an orthogonal B is best possible; one such choice is the Jacobi coordinate system that we shall use in Section 2 below.

For the boson problem, perhaps the most immediate reduction is what we have called the simple or $N/2$ bound based on the equality $\langle H \rangle = \langle H_2 \rangle$, where

$$H_2 = \frac{N}{2} \left[\sqrt{p_1^2 + m^2} + \sqrt{p_2^2 + m^2} + (N-1)V(r_{12}) \right]. \quad (1.2)$$

The $N/2$ bound is then the bottom E_2 of the spectrum of the scaled two-body Hamiltonian H_2 . We have explicitly for this bound

$$E \geq E_{N/2}^L = N \inf_{\psi} \left(\psi, \left[(p^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r) \right] \psi \right). \quad (1.3)$$

If this reasoning is applied to the Schrödinger harmonic-oscillator problem, one finds for large- N that $E_{N/2}^L \rightarrow E/\sqrt{2}$, whereas a reduction based on Jacobi coordinates [11] yields $E_L = E$. We note parenthetically that the $N/2$ bound is equivalent to using a non-orthogonal coordinate system consisting of a centre-of-mass coordinate and $N-1$ pair distances [7]. Similarly, one obtains dramatic improvement over the $N/2$ lower bound if Jacobi coordinates are used for the Salpeter harmonic-oscillator problem [8]. We have obtained improved lower bounds for potentials which are convex

transformations $V(r) = g(r^2)$ of the oscillator [9], and also, by very special reasoning, for the gravitational potential [10], $V(r) = -v/r$, $v > 0$. In the present paper we look for good lower bounds that are valid for general attractive potentials, for example, of the form $V(r) = -v/r + br$, $v \geq 0$, $b > 0$.

Since the spectrum of the semirelativistic many-body Hamiltonian H can be characterized variationally, it is straightforward to find upper energy bounds with the aid of a suitable trial function. The principal difficulty is to find a good general lower bound. We achieve this for $N = 3$, and for the case $m = 0$, $N = 4$. These partial results then allow the construction of corresponding lower bounds based on reductions of the many-body problem respectively to scaled $N = 3$ and $N = 4$ systems. A formulation that unifies these results and all the known earlier partial results may be expressed as a lower-bound conjecture, which then becomes a theorem for each case that is proved.

2. Lower-bound conjecture

We first consider a model N -body Hamiltonian. This model has been constructed so that it essentially yields the corresponding nonrelativistic result in the limit $m \rightarrow \infty$. We are guided in the first instance by the centre-of-mass identity and inequality [11]

$$\sum_{i=1}^N \mathbf{p}_i^2 = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N (\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2 + \frac{1}{N} \left(\sum_i^N \mathbf{p}_i \right)^2 \geq \frac{1}{N} \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N (\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2. \quad (2.1a)$$

For the corresponding semirelativistic problem, we lose this transparent algebraic inequality and must instead recover whatever can be proved to be true on the average. In a nutshell, this is the technical difficulty we must face in this paper. The Schrödinger N -body Hamiltonian H_S with the centre-of-mass kinetic energy removed and $\hbar = 1$ is therefore given by

$$H_S = \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N \left[\frac{1}{2mN} (\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2 + V(r_{ij}) \right]. \quad (2.2)$$

In Jacobi coordinates $[\rho] = B[\mathbf{r}]$, where B is an orthogonal $N \times N$ matrix with first row having entries all equal to $1/\sqrt{N}$, $\rho_2 = (\mathbf{r}_1 - \mathbf{r}_2)/\sqrt{2}$, and conjugate momenta $[\pi] = (B^t)^{-1}[\mathbf{p}] = B[\mathbf{p}]$, the equality in (2.1a) may be re-written simply

$$\sum_{i=1}^N \mathbf{p}_i^2 = \pi_1^2 + \sum_{i=2}^N \pi_i^2. \quad (2.1b)$$

Meanwhile, if $\Psi(\rho_2, \rho_3, \dots, \rho_N)$ is a normalized translation-invariant N -boson wave function, we have [10, Eqs. (6) and (7)]:

$$(\Psi, \pi_i^2 \Psi) = (\Psi, \pi_2^2 \Psi), \quad (\Psi, \rho_i^2 \Psi) = (\Psi, \rho_2^2 \Psi), \quad i = 2, 3, \dots \quad (2.3)$$

We note parenthetically, for future reference, that with Jacobi coordinates we have the following explicit expression for \mathbf{p}_N :

$$\mathbf{p}_N = \frac{\pi_1}{\sqrt{N}} - \sqrt{\frac{N-1}{N}} \pi_N. \quad (2.4)$$

When either the kinetic energy is a quadratic expression, as for all Schrödinger problems [11], or if the potential $V(r)$ is the harmonic oscillator $V(r) = kr^2$ [9], then these relations play a key role in the construction of a lower-bound model. Our purpose here is to make a reduction for the Salpeter problem and general $V(r)$, that is for problems for which neither the kinetic energy nor the potential energy has a simple quadratic form. We focus our attention on the kinetic energy since any progress made here would be potential independent. With these goals, the model N -body Hamiltonian we have constructed is given by

$$H_c = \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N \left[\sqrt{\gamma^{-1}(\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2 + \left(\frac{2m}{N-1}\right)^2} + V(r_{ij}) \right] \quad (2.5a)$$

or, equivalently,

$$H_c = \sum_{1 \leq i < j}^N \left[\gamma^{-1} \sqrt{\gamma(\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2 + (mN)^2} + V(r_{ij}) \right], \quad (2.5b)$$

where $\gamma = \binom{N}{2} = \frac{1}{2}N(N-1)$ is the binomial coefficient. In the Schrödinger limit $m \rightarrow \infty$, we find $H_c \rightarrow mN + H_S$, where H_S is exactly the corresponding Schrödinger N -body Hamiltonian with the centre-of-mass kinetic energy removed, given in (2.2). Meanwhile, for the special case $N = 2$ of the semirelativistic problem itself we recover the well-known 2-body Salpeter Hamiltonian

$$H = 2\sqrt{\left(\frac{\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2}{2}\right)^2 + m^2} + V(r_{12}). \quad (2.6)$$

If we use new conjugate coordinates, we may write $r = \|\mathbf{r}\| = r_{12}$ and $p = \|\mathbf{p}\| = \|(\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2)/2\|$, and then we have from (2.6)

$$H = 2\sqrt{p^2 + m^2} + V(r). \quad (2.7)$$

The idea is eventually to obtain an N -body lower bound which is the bottom of the spectrum of a scaled version of (2.6), namely

$$\mathcal{H} = \beta\sqrt{\lambda p^2 + m^2} + \gamma V(r), \quad \beta, \lambda, \gamma > 0. \quad (2.8)$$

Meanwhile, the Salpeter Hamiltonian H itself is given by (1.1). We now suppose that Ψ is a translation-invariant normalized boson trial function. We consider expectations with respect to Ψ and we first observe that the permutation symmetry of Ψ implies the equality

$$\langle H_c \rangle = \langle \mathcal{H} \rangle, \quad \text{where} \quad \beta = N, \quad \lambda = \frac{2(N-1)}{N}, \quad \gamma = \frac{1}{2}N(N-1). \quad (2.9)$$

With these explicit values for the parameters $\{\beta, \lambda, \gamma\}$ in \mathcal{H} , we are now able to formulate the central idea of this paper explicitly, namely

Conjecture

$$\langle H \rangle \geq \langle \mathcal{H} \rangle. \quad (2.10)$$

This implies the following explicit conjectured lower energy bound

$$E \geq E_c^L = N \inf_{\psi} \left(\psi, \left[\left(\frac{2(N-1)}{N} p^2 + m^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r) \right] \psi \right). \quad (2.11)$$

We can recover all earlier sharp bounds from this expression. We immediately recover the Schrödinger bounds [11] in the $m \rightarrow \infty$ limit (2.5). If we now assume (2.11) is true as it stands for $m \geq 0$, and $V(r) = vr^2$, we recover our earlier bounds [8] for the semirelativistic oscillator. For $m > 0$, and $V(r) = -v/r$, we recover our earlier sharp bounds for the gravitational problem [10]. Meanwhile, the bounds we prove in the present paper establish a wider range of validity for this conjecture. For example, our Theorem 3 below establishes (2.11) for $m \geq 0$ and $N = 3$ in dimension $d = 3$; and Theorem 4 establishes the case $m = 0$, $N = 4$. At present we know of no counter example.

If we compare (2.5b) with (1.1) we see that the expectation of the difference may be written

$$\langle H - H_c \rangle = \langle H - \mathcal{H} \rangle = \langle \delta(m, N) \rangle, \quad (2.12)$$

where

$$\delta(m, N) = \sum_{i=1}^N \sqrt{\mathbf{p}_i^2 + m^2} - \frac{2}{N-1} \sum_{1=i < j}^N \sqrt{\frac{N-1}{2N} (\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j)^2 + m^2}. \quad (2.13)$$

All our lower-bound results follow from the positivity (strictly speaking, non-negativity) of $\langle \delta(m, N) \rangle$, when this can be established. We consider immediately the case $\{m = 0, N = 2\}$: the kind of reasoning we use in this case is generalized for the other cases. The approach we adopt is to think of the mean-value computation in momentum space where the momentum vectors \mathbf{p}_i are multiplicative operators: these vectors form geometrical figures whose edges are the corresponding norms $\|\mathbf{p}_i\|$; mean values $\langle \|\mathbf{p}_i\| \rangle = d$ are considered last. For example, with $N = 2$, the three vectors $\{\mathbf{p}_1, \mathbf{p}_2, \mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\}$ form the sides of a triangle. The observation that, as a consequence of the triangle inequality and boson symmetry, the largest possible value for $\langle \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\| \rangle$ is $2d$, then establishes positivity in this case. For $m > 0$ the argument must be adjusted accordingly. We shall consider this point in more detail in Section 5 below, for the more interesting case $N = 3$ and $m > 0$. In order to prepare for what might be called ‘stochastic geometry’, we consider first $N = 3$ and $m = 0$, although this is a special case of the more general problem $m \geq 0$ discussed later. As we have remarked above, for the corresponding Schrödinger problem for general $V(r)$, or for the Salpeter harmonic-oscillator problem with $V(r) = kr^2$, a quadratic form is involved either in the kinetic- or the potential-energy term: for both of these problems, the conjecture follows as a result of the general quadratic mean-value identities (2.3) in Jacobi coordinates. For the Salpeter problems with general V , which is the subject of the present paper, the quadratic expressions (in momentum space) always appear inside the square-root sign, so these identities do not immediately apply. The general inequality $\langle \|\mathbf{p}\| \rangle \leq \langle \|\mathbf{p}\|^2 \rangle^{\frac{1}{2}}$ does not remove this difficulty.

3. Proof in the case $m = 0$, $N = 3$

We have the following definition from (2.13):

$$\delta(0, 3) = \|\mathbf{p}_1\| + \|\mathbf{p}_2\| + \|\mathbf{p}_3\| - \frac{1}{\sqrt{3}} (\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\| + \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_3\| + \|\mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_3\|). \quad (3.1)$$

$$\langle \delta(0, 3) \rangle = \left\langle \|\mathbf{p}_1\| + \|\mathbf{p}_2\| + \|\mathbf{p}_3\| - \frac{1}{\sqrt{3}} (\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\| + \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_3\| + \|\mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_3\|) \right\rangle. \quad (3.2)$$

We note that $\delta(0, 3)$ itself is negative for the choice $\mathbf{p}_2 = -\mathbf{p}_1 \neq \mathbf{0}$ and $\mathbf{p}_3 = \mathbf{0}$. However, this does not happen on the average. We have:

Theorem 1 $\langle \delta(0, 3) \rangle \geq 0$.

Proof We know by boson symmetry that

$$\langle \|\mathbf{p}_1\| \rangle = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_2\| \rangle = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_3\| \rangle := k \quad (3.3)$$

and

$$\langle \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\| \rangle = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_3\| \rangle = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_3\| \rangle := q. \quad (3.4)$$

We may think of the $\{\mathbf{p}_i\}$, and their differences, as vectors, since they are used in momentum space where they become multiplicative operators. The six vectors in (3.1) are the six edges of a pyramid in \mathbb{R}^3 ; the norms, $\|\mathbf{p}_i\|$ and $\|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\|$, are the corresponding lengths of these six pyramid edges. The permutation symmetry of the wave function implies the equalities (3.3) and (3.4). The mean difference $\langle \delta(0, 3) \rangle$ is clearly smallest when the origin of the vectors $\{\mathbf{p}_i\}$ is at the centroid of the triangle formed by the differences $\{\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\}$. In this minimal case we know from elementary geometry that $q = \sqrt{3}k$; consequently, $\langle \delta(0, 3) \rangle = 0$. It follows that in general $\langle \delta(0, 3) \rangle \geq 0$. This completes the proof for the case $m = 0, N = 3$. \square

4. Proof for the case $m = 0$, $N = 4$.

We consider the case $N = 4$ and $m = 0$ in (2.13). The six differences $\{\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\}$ form a tetrahedron. The average lengths $q = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\| \rangle$ are equal and force the tetrahedron to be regular. Meanwhile, the four mean lengths $k = \langle \|\mathbf{p}_i\| \rangle$ are again equal. This symmetry occurs when the \mathbf{p} -origin is at the centroid of the tetrahedron, of, say, height h . For such a tetrahedron we have

$$h = \sqrt{\frac{2}{3}}q \quad \text{and} \quad k = \sqrt{\frac{3}{8}}q. \quad (4.1)$$

We may therefore write

$$\langle \delta(0, 4) \rangle = 4 \langle \|\mathbf{p}_1\| \rangle - 6 \left(\frac{2}{3} \right) \sqrt{\frac{3}{8}} \langle \|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\| \rangle = 4k - 4\sqrt{\frac{3}{8}}q = 0. \quad (4.2)$$

Thus we have:

Theorem 2 $\langle \delta(0, 4) \rangle \geq 0$.

5. Proof in the case $m \geq 0$, $N = 3$

We consider

$$\begin{aligned} \delta(m, 3) = & (\|\mathbf{p}_1\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (\|\mathbf{p}_2\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (\|\mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \\ & - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \end{aligned} \quad (5.1)$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \delta(m, 3) \rangle = & \left\langle (\|\mathbf{p}_1\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (\|\mathbf{p}_2\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (\|\mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right. \\ & \left. - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} - (\tfrac{1}{3}\|\mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_3\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right\rangle. \end{aligned} \quad (5.2)$$

Theorem 3 $\langle \delta(m, 3) \rangle \geq 0$.

Proof The three vectors \mathbf{p}_i , $i = 1, 2, 3$, and their three differences $\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j$ form six edges of a pyramid in \mathbb{R}^3 ; the norms, $\|\mathbf{p}_i\|$ and $\|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\|$, are the corresponding lengths of these six pyramid edges. We now denote by T the triangle formed by the three difference edges $\{\|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\|\}$. For convenience, we shall think of T as lying in a horizontal plane and denote by P the top vertex of the pyramid; without loss of generality, we shall speak of P being above T . We let C be the point in the plane of T vertically under P . We now pick the vertex of T which contains \mathbf{p}_1 , and call this V_1 . In the plane of T we construct a line from V_1 that is perpendicular to CV_1 and of length m , ending in the point U_1 . We then join U_1 to P and observe that $\widehat{PV_1U_1} = \pi/2$. Similar constructions are now made with the other two vertices V_2 and V_3 of T ; the three line segments U_iV_i are chosen to ‘flow’ in the same way round the pyramid axis CP . In fact, a new pyramid is formed by the three lines PU_i . By permutation symmetry we have that $\langle |PU_i| \rangle = k$ and $\langle |CU_i| \rangle = q$ where $i = 1, 2, 3$, and moreover

$$\left\langle (\|\mathbf{p}_i\|^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right\rangle := k, \quad i = 1, 2, 3, \quad (5.3)$$

and

$$\left\langle \left(\frac{1}{3} \|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_j\|^2 + m^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right\rangle := q, \quad i, j = 1, 2, 3, \quad i \neq j. \quad (5.4)$$

Since the position of P which minimizes k is C , and symmetry is obtained on the average, we conclude by elementary geometry that $k \geq q$. This inequality completes the proof of Theorem 3. \square

6. Application to $N \geq 3$

For $N \geq 3$ we can deduce a stronger lower bound than that provided by the $N/2$ bound, based on the result of Section 5. If E and Ψ are the exact energy and corresponding wave function, we have $E = (\Psi, H\Psi)$ and therefore, by boson symmetry

and Theorem 3, we have

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{N}{3} \left(\Psi, \left[(p_1^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (p_2^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} + (p_3^2 + m^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right. \right. \\ &\quad \left. \left. + \frac{N-1}{2} (V(r_{12}) + V(r_{13}) + V(r_{23})) \right] \Psi \right) \\ &\geq N \left(\Psi, \left[\left(\frac{1}{3} p_{12}^2 + m^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r_{12}) \right] \Psi \right) \\ &\geq N \left(\Psi, \left[\left(\frac{4}{3} p^2 + m^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r) \right] \Psi \right), \end{aligned}$$

where $\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{r}_1 - \mathbf{r}_2$ and $\mathbf{p} = \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_2) = \mathbf{p}_{12}$. Thus we have, for $N \geq 3$, $m \geq 0$, and $\|\psi(r)\| = 1$:

Theorem 4

$$E \geq E_{N/3}^L = N \inf_{\psi} \left(\psi, \left[\left(\frac{4}{3} p^2 + m^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r) \right] \psi \right). \quad (6.1)$$

In similar fashion, we can relate the N -body problem for $N \geq 4$ and $m = 0$ to a reduced 4-body problem based on Theorem 2. Specifically, we have for $N \geq 4$, $m = 0$, and $\|\psi(r)\| = 1$:

Theorem 5

$$E \geq E_{N/4}^L = N \inf_{\psi} \left(\psi, \left[\left(\frac{3}{2} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \|\mathbf{p}\| + \frac{N-1}{2} V(r) \right] \psi \right). \quad (6.2)$$

Theorems 4 and 5 summarize the principal results of this paper.

7. The linear potential $V(r) = r$ with $m = 0$

The lower bounds we have found all presume that the bottom of the spectrum of a scaled one-body problem can be found. For Salpeter Hamiltonians, this task itself may not be trivially easy, although more tractable than for the many-body problem. For the operator $H = \|\mathbf{p}\| + r$ in three dimensions, we have at our disposal the accurate value $e = 2.2322$, for example, from the work of Boukraa and Basdevant [12] (the linear potential has also been considered by Pirner and Wachs [13] in an application to quark systems). By elementary scaling arguments we therefore have for the one-body problem

$$H = ap + br \quad \rightarrow \quad E(a, b) = (ab)^{\frac{1}{2}} E(1, 1) = (ab)^{\frac{1}{2}} e, \quad a, b > 0, \quad e = 2.2322. \quad (7.1)$$

This relation will generate all the energy lower bounds for N -body problems with this potential. We shall use the notation $E_{N/2}^L$, $E_{N/3}^L$, and $E_{N/4}^L$, for the lower bounds given by equations (1.3), (6.1), and (6.2), and E_c for the conjectured bound (2.11). The formula (7.1) then allows us to derive formulas for these energies. Explicitly we find:

$$E_{N/2}^L = N \left(\frac{N-1}{2} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} e, \quad N \geq 2 \quad (7.2a)$$

$$E_{N/3}^L = N \left(\frac{N-1}{\sqrt{3}} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} e, \quad N \geq 3 \quad (7.2b)$$

$$E_{N/4}^L = N \left(\frac{3(N-1)^2}{8} \right)^{\frac{1}{4}} e, \quad N \geq 4 \quad (7.2c)$$

$$E_c^L = N \left(\frac{(N-1)^3}{2N} \right)^{\frac{1}{4}} e, \quad N \geq 2. \quad (7.2d)$$

In order to find an upper bound, we follow Ref. [9] and use a Gaussian wave function, which we write initially in the form

$$\Phi(\rho_2, \rho_3, \dots, \rho_N) = C \exp \left(-\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=2}^N \rho_i^2 \right) = \prod_{i=2}^N \phi(\rho_i), \quad C = \left(\frac{2}{\pi^{\frac{1}{4}}} \right)^{N-1}, \quad (7.3)$$

where the constant C is chosen to ensure the normalization of each radial factor ϕ on $L^2([0, \infty), r^2 dr)$. The boson symmetry of the trial function allows us to write $E \leq E_g^U = (\Phi, H\Phi)$, where we have

$$E_g^U = (\Phi, [N\|\mathbf{p}_N\| + \gamma V(\|\mathbf{r}_1 - \mathbf{r}_2\|)] \Phi). \quad (7.4)$$

The identity (2.4) and the lemma proved in [8] (which allows us to remove the operator term π_1) imply

$$E_g^U = \left(\Phi, N \sqrt{\frac{N-1}{N}} \|\pi_N\| + \gamma V(\sqrt{2}\rho_2) \Phi \right). \quad (7.5)$$

The permutation symmetry of the Gaussian function in the *relative* coordinates and the factoring property allow us to replace π_N by $\pi_2 \equiv \sqrt{2}\mathbf{p}$. We write the conjugate variable to \mathbf{p} as $\mathbf{r} \equiv \sqrt{2}\rho_2$, so that $V(r) = r$, and the wave function becomes $\phi(r)$. By introducing an additional scale parameter $\sigma > 0$, we then find

$$E_g^U = N \left(\sqrt{\frac{2(N-1)}{N}} \frac{1}{\sigma} \langle p \rangle + \frac{N-1}{2} \sigma \langle r \rangle \right). \quad (7.6)$$

Since the Gaussian radial function $\phi(r)$ is form invariant under the 3-dimensional Fourier transformation, we have the equality

$$\langle p \rangle = \langle r \rangle = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\pi}}.$$

Since the minimum of the form $\alpha/\sigma + \beta\sigma$ over the scale $\sigma > 0$ is $2(\alpha\beta)^{\frac{1}{2}}$, we arrive at the following explicit formula for the Gaussian upper bound:

$$E_g^U = 4N \left(\frac{(N-1)^3}{2N\pi^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{4}}, \quad N \geq 2. \quad (7.7)$$

We can immediately test this formula for the case $N = 2$ to obtain $E_g^U = 3.19154$, which is to be compared with the accurate numerical value $E = \sqrt{2}e = 3.1568$. More generally, we exhibit in Table 1 ratios $R_X = E_g^U/E_X^L$, where X is $N/2, N/3, N/4$ or, for the conjectured lower bound, $R_c = E_g^U/E_c^L$. The percentage error in the determination of the energy by the bounds is approximately $50(R-1)\%$. The monotonic behaviour of R with N follows from the ‘distance’ of N from the size of the sub-system whose lower bound is best possible; if the conjecture were true, the quality of the lower bound would be the same for all N .

Table 1. Ratios of upper to lower energy bounds $R_X = E_g^U/E_X^L$, where $X = N/2, N/3, N/4$; the ratio for the conjectured lower bound is $R_c = E_g^U/E_c^L$.

	$N = 2$	$N = 3$	$N = 4$	$N = 5$	$N = 6$	$N = 10$	$N \rightarrow \infty$
$R_{N/2}$	1.011	1.08639	1.11886	1.13706	1.14872	1.17104	1.20229
$R_{N/3}$		1.011	1.04121	1.05815	1.069	1.08977	1.11886
$R_{N/4}$			1.011	1.02745	1.03799	1.05815	1.08639
R_c	1.011	1.011	1.011	1.011	1.011	1.011	1.011

8. Conclusion

If a system of N identical particles is bound together by attractive pair potentials, the Hamiltonian H has N kinetic-energy terms and $\gamma = \binom{N}{2}$ potential terms. If the kinetic energy of the centre-of-mass can be subtracted off, then the number of kinetic-energy terms is reduced by one, and we would expect to obtain an expression of the form $E = \langle H \rangle = \langle (N-1)K + \gamma V \rangle$. The N -body energy E is then bounded below by the lowest energy \mathcal{E} of a ‘reduced’ one-body operator of the form $\mathcal{H} = (N-1)K + \gamma V$; if the boson-symmetry requirement of the N -body wave function is not too stringent, then this lower bound is at the same time a good approximation. This story is realized exactly for the nonrelativistic problem [11]: for the special case of the harmonic oscillator, \mathcal{E} yields the exact energy E of the many-body system. The reduction details depend on the quadratic form of the nonrelativistic many-body kinetic-energy operator and the identities (2.3) for quadratic expressions in Jacobi relative coordinates.

For the semirelativistic counterpart, one generally loses the quadratic form in H and, along with it, the immediate reduction. An alternative reduction to the $H_{N/2}$ Hamiltonian is always possible and is important theoretically, but the resultant lower energy bound is weak. A quadratic form is returned to the potential in H in the special case of the harmonic oscillator, and this yields [9] a very sharp bound on the energy, though not now the exact solution, except in the Schrödinger limit $m \rightarrow \infty$. For general pair potentials, we have constructed a new Hamiltonian H_c that is translation invariant, both in coordinate and momentum space, and which reduces to the usual two-body Hamiltonian for $N = 2$, and generally to $Nm + H_S$ in the large- m limit, where H_S is the Schrödinger Hamiltonian with the centre-of-mass kinetic energy removed. A reduction $\langle H_c \rangle = \langle \mathcal{H} \rangle \geq \mathcal{E}$ of H_c to a one-body Hamiltonian \mathcal{H} immediately follows. This is useful for the study of the many-body Hamiltonian H whenever it can also be established that $\langle H \rangle \geq \langle H_c \rangle$. We conjecture that this is always true. In the present paper we have proved the conjecture for $N = 3$, and for $N = 4$ if $m = 0$; it is also true for the harmonic oscillator, and generally in the large- m limit. For the case of static gravity $V(r) = -1/r$, the conjecture yields the identical result to the energy bound we have established by a completely different argument, valid specially for this potential [10].

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